

Fodor's Choice

2006

Hot travel picks for the cold winter months



HOTELS

★ **Blue Jay Lodge, Malpais, Costa Rica.** As close to sleeping in the rainforest as you can get, you'll sleep perched in a treehouse at this comfortable property tucked away in a forested mountainside, only steps away from the beach. If you can tear yourself away from a peaceful rest in your hammock, climb the mountain trail in search of an array of birds and howler monkeys.

★ **Chakrabongse Villas, Bangkok, Thailand.** Escape the hustle and bustle of the city, and feel like royalty as you unwind in one of three enchanting villas located in the gardens of the Chakrabongse House, built for a prince in 1908. Within walking distance to some of the city's best sights and located on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, the location can't be beat.

★ **Coral Reef Club, St. James, Barbados.** Spend your days relaxing on the white-sand beach or around the mosaic-tiled pool, getting up only for afternoon tea. Elegant and stylish without being stuffy, the hotel's suites are set in pristine coral-stone manses and cottages scattered over 12½ acres of lush flower-filled gardens. Each is individually designed, beautifully decorated, and wonderfully private.

★ **Esperanza, Los Cabos, Mexico.** Luxury, relaxation, and beauty converge in this unmatched tropical oasis. With the smallest suite measuring 925 square feet, you'll be enveloped in opulence with sumptuous linens, plush robes, and double-head showers. Take a dip in your private pool, lounge in your suite's hammock overlooking the ocean, or experience the ultimate in pampering as you bask in a steam cave or enjoy a massage or facial using indigenous materials like fresh fruits, sea greens, and desert herbs.

★ **Faena Hotel + Universe, Buenos Aires, Argentina.** For a completely mind and body-melting experience, stay at this sophisticated property with rooms decorated to feng-shui perfection with rich reds and crisp whites, complete with velvet curtains and venetian blinds that open electronically to views of the river and city. Thick velvet couches, leather arm chairs, flat-screen TVs, and surround-sound stereo systems all add to the luxury, and two stellar restaurants, a cabaret, and an elaborate spa with a Turkish bath help to make for an even more memorable experience.

★ **Ho'oiloo House, Maui, Hawai'i.** Feel immediately at peace from the moment you enter this stunning setting with open-air hallways that take advantage of the breathtaking views of the Pacific. The Zen-like serenity follows you into the uniquely decorated rooms with furnishings imported directly from Bali, and feature traditional Balinese doors with Mother of Pearl inlay, and a private lanai that makes you feel completely isolated. For a truly unique experience, slip into the private outdoor shower for unbelievable ocean views.

★ **Mala Mala, Mpumalanga, South Africa.** Unbeatable animal viewing awaits at this legendary game lodge that shares a 19-mile boundary with Kruger National Park. The luxury, elegance and comfort of the camp, combined with the exhilarating game drives and guided walks in beautiful unspoiled wilderness, is incomparable. Dine under the stars around a log fire while a delectable dinner is served in the grand old African manner.

★ **Morgan's Rock Hacienda and Ecolodge, Playa Ocotal, Nicaragua.** You'll be helping the environment by staying at this true eco-lodge, perched on a cliff overlooking a private white sand beach. Take in views of the most spectacular Pacific sunsets from bungalows made from volcanic rock and a gleaming array of wood, all cultivated on the property with reforestation in mind. Make time for the wealth of tours offered, from sunrise estuary kayaking to snorkeling for lobster that will be artfully prepared for you that same night.

★ **Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro, Málaga, Spain.** Surrounded by pine trees located two miles above the city, this cozy gray-stone parador has spectacular views of Málaga and the bay. Sit in the stone-arched terrace and enjoy a magnificent display of Andalusian gastronomy, including the *fritura de pescaditos a la malagueña* (small fried Málaga-style fish) specialty.

★ **Red Setter Inn, Greer, Arizona.** Curl up by the roaring fire with a cup of hot cider at this cozy, hand-hewn-log B&B. Activities abound for all seasons with winter-time downhill and cross country skiing, sledding, snowmobiles and authentic horse-drawn sleigh rides. This retreat in the tiny town of Greer is home to excellent wildlife viewing - don't be surprised to see mountain lions or black bear around the stream below, stopping to have a drink or catching unsuspecting trout.

Photos from left to right:
Chef Mavro, O'ahu, Hawai'i / Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro, Málaga, Spain / Mala Mala, Mpumalanga, South Africa / Valley of the Temples, Sicily, Italy (Fototeca ENIT) / Diving in St. Eustatius, St. Eustatius, Caribbean